4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
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whole, depends in large part on one's frame of reference.[2] In the most general terms, the people of Bang Chan are like almost all ethnic Thai peasants (excepting on some counts Thai Moslems and some of the economically disenfranchised people of the Northeast) in that they have a keen sense of membership in the nation-state with a deep loyalty to the Crown, speak the Thai language, are Therevada Buddhists, are outwardly highly deferential to the authority of the Central government, and have a conception of the good life that stresses fun, physical comfort and security, intellectual simplicity and practicality, and a moral (as contrasted with a natural) ordering of the universe. Too, like the vast majority of their rural compatriots,[3] they are engaged in the production of rice, an activity which to them is not only an economic operation (Ingram 1955, Janlekha 1955) but almost a way of life, being bound up with their social structure, dietary habits, religious practices, and even their philosophical (J. R. Hanks 1961) and aesthetic conceptions.

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[2] For readers unfamiliar with Thailand, the nation-state, it should be noted that the country is predominantly rural; 84 percent of the total national labor force is in agriculture and there are only ten towns with populations of 20,000 people or more, in which 6 percent of the national population (1947 census) live. Although Bangkok has a population of approximately 1,200,000, the second largest city, Chiengmai, has only 60,000 (1957 estimate).

The nation also has a high degree of ethnic homogeneity, 82 percent of the population considering themselves native Thai (1957 estimate). The largest ethnic minority group is the overseas Chinese, comprising 11.3 percent of the population (1953 estimate, from Skinner 1957), the balance being Malays, Cambodians, and Indians; the so-called tribal groups number in toto only about 150,000 people.

The religious composition of the country is 94.1 percent Buddhist, 3.9 percent Moslem, 0.5 percent Christian, and 1.5 percent "others," many of whom are tribal animists. Thai Buddhism is of the Southern (Therevada, Hinayana, or "Lesser Vehicle") variety and as practiced by most Thai, has syncretized within it many Brahmanic and traditional Southeast Asian animistic elements (see the chapter on "Religion" in Sharp *et al.* 1956, and Textor 1960). The largest minority religion, Islam, is practiced by ethnic Malay living in the four southernmost provinces of Thailand, as well as by some ethnic Thai—many of them descendants of former Malay slaves or war prisoners—scattered through the areas north and east of Bangkok, including Bang Chan, where they comprise 9.8 percent of the local population. Relationships between Buddhists and Moslems, at least in Bang Chan, are quite amicable and except for ideal prohibitions against intermarriage and occasional offhand remarks such as "Moslem women are loose" or "Moslems kill animals," there is little overt hostility between the two groups. Certainly few Bang Chaners ever distinguish between their Buddhist and Moslem neighbors when arranging a work group, selecting a drinking partner, or even compiling a guest list for a son's ordination.

[3] Janlekha (in Sharp *et al.* 1953: 110) indicates that 55 percent of the total national labor force is involved *solely* in the cultivation of rice—which occupies approximately 90 percent of the total cultivated land area—and as many as 92 percent of all agricultural households are rice households. The 55 percent figure excludes all those people who are involved in the transportation, milling, storing, and distribution of rice. Eighty-five percent of the population of Bang Chan (1953) are rice farmers.

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from Bang Chan, the figure is as high as 85 percent (Dobby 1950). In these terms, therefore, it is best to view the incidence of land tenancy in Bang Chan as largely a function of local, historical circumstances.

A final word should be said about Bang Chan's proximity and accessibility to Bangkok—the cornucopia of so much that is new, interesting, and desirable (if somewhat equivocally) to most Siamese peasants. It is clear that Bang Chan's closeness to the capital creates certain conditions that would not be present in a community situated, for example, 200 kilometers, instead of 31 kilometers, from the nation's largest city. Simply on practical grounds, this nearness to the city permits the villagers to take advantage of opportunities—economic, recreational, and religious—which those living in distant provinces can obtain only after serious consideration of the financial and psychological expenses involved: "Do I have shoes to wear in the city? Do they treat people from the provinces well? With whom will I stay? Do I have the train fare?" A Bang Chaner who visits the capital does not have to make such financial or emotional commitments, since it is only a one hour, three and one-half baht (seventeen and one-half cents) bus ride back home, although many do share with their up-country cousins the peasant's apprehensions about city manners.

The attractions of Bangkok take several forms: off-season jobs, medical care, kinship ties, special schools, great market places, famed monasteries or fairs, and the many other places where one can go to have fun. A survey conducted in Bang Chan during 1955 (Goldsen and Ralis 1957) indicates that 62 percent of all household heads in the village visited Bangkok more than twice during the year for just such purposes. (Twenty-one percent had not gone to Bangkok at all, and 23 percent had gone more than ten times.) Many villagers, particularly younger men, attracted by the promise of regular wages, lighter work, and the bright lights of the city, leave Bang Chan with the hope that they will never have to return, although of course many do. The Goldsen-Ralis survey reveals that 26 percent of their respondents had lived in Bangkok for a year or more, although for most this was in fulfillment of military service.

Living in Bangkok is not something that is desired in and of itself. Bang Chaners are keenly aware of the disadvantages of city living—particularly its great expense and insecurity—and are impressed only by those individuals who have made a success out of their urban sojourn. Most would agree that a Bangkok coolie, for all his exposure to the wonders of the modern world, lives a considerably less attractive life than they do.

The frequent transit between Bang Chan and Bangkok,[8] however,

[8] Of less practical consequence than their direct personal experiences and word-of-mouth contacts, but not to be ignored, are the villagers' contacts with Bangkok by way of radio, newspapers, books, and of course by way of what their children bring

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continually brings to the attention of the villagers urban standards and aspirations which, whenever possible, they attempt to apply to themselves. L. M. Hanks (1959*b*: 19) sees the operation of this characteristic acculturative mechanism in Bang Chan in terms of the villagers' "search for respectability": "A respectable cremation requires an orchestra; a respectable dwelling a tile roof; a respectable sickness an injection; and a respectable family must chaperone carefully its growing daughters. So run a host of points which help to bolster but not necessarily to advance social position."

Yet, after the relationship between village and town has been considered, Bang Chan remains very much a peasant community, whose residents are concerned first and foremost with the cultivation of rice, the maintenance of their monastery, and their own immediate social environment. Despite aspirations, many Bang Chan cremations must go without the orchestra; most dwellings lack the tile roof; injections are taken only by those who can afford them; and the necessity for boys and girls to work together during harvest time, a period of unavoidably infectious joy, precludes any rigidly imposed chaperonage. Perhaps the best assessment of the cultural position of Bang Chan was provided by the writer's field assistant—an individual born and reared in a village in the Northeast who, although in many respects worldly and urbane, maintained an almost passionate identification with his peasant background—who said: "When I first came here to Bang Chan, I never thought that people living so close to Bangkok could be *real* Thai villagers. But they are. They are not as friendly and hospitable as Northeastern peasants, and they are more interested in money, but they have a much greater love of the land. No city person could ever think and feel as they do."

Family Life and Social Organization

In terms of the traditional categories of social structural analysis, the social organization of Bang Chan is strikingly simple. There are essentially only five social units which demand, and toward which villagers express, relatively enduring psychological commitments. These are the nuclear family;

home from school, the curriculum for which is written and directed by Ministry of Education officials in the city. Approximately 14 percent of Bang Chan households have battery driven radios (there is no electricity in the village) and approximately 60 percent of the villagers can read, although considerably fewer actually have the proficiency to go comfortably through a newspaper; theoretically the same number of people can write, but few Bang Chan adults have the courage to take pencil to paper without feeling discomfort over their handwriting, spelling, and knowledge of stylistic forms. Newspapers that people bring home from town are passed around and read more for their entertainment than information; the few books that are seen in the village are pulp magazines, religious or moralistic writings, and occasionally do-it-yourself pamphlets ("How to Raise Chickens the Modern Way").

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596 *156 As the reader might by now suspect, it is not easy to determine the basis of the unity of the family. However, of all the factors that keep people living together in amity and affection, two come to the fore: a sense of love, obligation, and respect that is derived from the simple fact of kinship, but which must be continuously confirmed by mutual benefits; and economic considerations.

596 476 The economic foundation of the family is significant not only because the family is in fact the sole economic and occupational unit in the community (with the exception of the monkhood and school) but because the villagers themselves think of the family in terms of its economic functions. People say that they marry for wealth or because of the productive capacities of their spouses;[13] spouses stay together because the economic costs of a split are too great; most important of all, people are keenly *aware* of their economic interdependence. Fathers say that they need children to work in the fields and care for the buffalos, that a family needs a mother so that its members will be fed, that siblings are useful because it is easy to borrow from them (although, as noted earlier, some are unhappy about the intrusion of the kinship tie into what they regard to be a commercial transaction). Many villagers extend this economic, transactional type of thinking to other aspects of the kinship relationship. Thus they say that "the purpose of marriage is to have a companion who will take care of you when you get sick," or very frequently that "my parents went to the trouble of bringing me up so they would have a person to make merit for them when they die." The emphasis here is on independent agents serving each other because it is mutually beneficial.

[581] [593] [581] [593]

*156 • 181 171 571 The love and affection that people feel for each other is of course grounded in the close associations that one finds in most nuclear families. However, the attitudes of respect that one sees are perhaps more distinctively Thai. Almost all the literature on Thailand refers, at one point or another, to the patterns of respect (*khwaamnabthyy*) existing between people, both within and without the family. These patterns are based, in the first instance, on the status inequalities that exist in almost all social

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[125] [13] In responding to the unstructured Sentence Completion Test item, *"He (she) wants to get a wife (husband) who. . . ,"* for example, thirty-one of sixty informants indicated that they wanted a mate who "was a good worker," "earned a living," "was rich," or otherwise had high socio-economic status. Only two persons said that they wanted a spouse for reasons that could be reasonably defined as sentimental: one woman wanted a husband who "would be a good friend with whom she could discuss things," and a man said he wanted a wife whom "he loved." Other informants gave completions distributed among a variety of categories: "polite, well-mannered, handsome, kind, strong, and good" spouses; and six women wanted husbands who would be faithful.

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relationships: within the family, usually in terms of the relative ages of people; elsewhere, in terms of age, wealth, power, knowledge, religious or governmental role. Secondly, they are based on the assumption that every individual, regardless of his position in the hierarchy, deserves respect. The first is a respect associated with the proper performance of one's role; the second, a recognition of the essential dignity of every human being.

The role of these respect patterns cannot be emphasized enough. Benedict, in her study (1946) of Thai culture at a distance, referred to the learning of the *waj*, or gesture of obeisance, as "the first teaching the child receives." Although the *waj* is perhaps not the very first social act the child learns, I have seen infants no more than two weeks old being guided by the mother in raising the palms of their little hands to the forehead in expression of deference to superiors. The older infant who can do this on his own almost always receives acknowledgments of approval and delight from the adults in attendance. An older sibling really means it when he says of his relationship with his younger brothers, "when I ask them to do some kind of work, they go and do it. They never disobey, and when there is no disobedience, there is no hatred. . . . Formerly, whenever there was entertainment somewhere I took them with me. My younger siblings love me a lot. . . ." His position in the authority structure assumes the respect of those younger than he, and they willingly grant it for, among other things, he plays his role well as the kindly superior who takes them with him whenever there is entertainment. All the polite little linguistic forms (honorifics, expletives suggesting status and, most important, ordinary kinship terminology with its specification of relative age) as well as kinesthetic forms (lowering the body while passing a seated older person, holding the younger between one's legs and with arms around him in a position of protection) also serve to emphasize the respect that people grant one another because of their differential status. Perhaps the most revealing illustration of the strength of these patterns, at least the authority pattern, was provided by a two-year-old toddler who pointed to the stomach of his pregnant mother and said with pride, "My younger sibling is in there. When he is born he will be *my* responsibility." Little doubt that when the child is born he will give his older brother his due.

With regard to the other respect form, recognizing the dignity of every human being, more than once I have heard parents say that they disliked giving their child a certain medicine "because it offends the baby; he does not like it. It is better not to give it to him than to hurt his feelings." Although I do not doubt that in some instances the parents were annoyed more by the screams of the child than anything else, I am also convinced that for the most part they were respecting his basic individuality and right

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various kinds of ants living in Thailand and the United States. (Such are the topics that interest villagers.) The villagers wanted to know the English names for small red ants, normal black ones, and the large, rusty colored variety that are indigenous to the tropics. I named the first two with no difficulty. For the third, I said simply, "a giant ant." The assistant, turning to one of the informants, first gave the literal Thai equivalent of "giant," and then, as if this were the funniest thing he had heard that week, began to repeat, "giant, gi-ant, gi-ant." In a few seconds, they were all bursting with laughter.

Different, yet part of the same psychological constellation, is the whole complex of behaviors associated with the term, *sanug*. *Sanug* is usually translated into English simply as "fun." However, this translation conveys little of the motivational significance of the term. Essentially, *sanug* is a quality inherent in all situations which are not only fun but also emotionally worthwhile. In fact, these two states are often thought of as reciprocals of one another. An activity that is novel, diverting, or that can be done comfortably, is *sanug dii* (good fun); one that is tedious, overdemanding, that lacks the opportunity for frivolity, is not *sanug* and should be avoided. Harvesting rice in coöperative work groups, attending a ceremonial, participating in an election (see Phillips 1958: 45–46), or even taking something as outlandish as a Sentence Completion Test are all *sanug*. (The unifying elements of these diverse activities are either their novelty or the fact that they involve the presence of relatively large numbers of people but require no genuine interchange with them.) On the other hand, going into the army or working for a demanding superior are not *sanug*.

The importance of *sanug* is that it provides the villagers with a standard of value, a measure of how much they wish to commit themselves to a particular activity. The role of this standard should not be underestimated. Villagers who have taken a job in the city, often involving a time-bound daily routine or continuous, sustained attention to a task (work in a small factory, for example) frequently return to the village explaining that they quit "because it wasn't *sanug*. How can you work on a job if there is never any time for fun?" Foreign employers, with their greater concern for the job than with the person who does it and with their annoying tendency to be *cuu cii* (compulsive, fussy, exacting) are a particular target for this indictment, although this is usually based on hearsay rather than personal experience. On the other hand, villagers will often take on free of charge a major job (for example, helping a neighbor build a house) precisely because it is *sanug*. Although there are other considerations operating here—creating or repaying a personal obligation, doing a *bunkhun* ("a goodness") for a neighbor—the "sanug-ful" aspects of the task are always

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181 461 476 salient: the free food, drink, and chitchat at the end of a hard day's work; the fun of working together with several other individuals. Notice that in this kind of situation there is no overseer demanding the person's effort. His labor is freely given and may be freely withdrawn.

181 *156 571 In describing *sanug* as a measure of how much villagers wish to commit themselves to a particular activity, I mean to communicate a point and not merely to turn a phrase. The word "commit," which appears often in this book, is used to convey the idea that coöperative, mutually expectable interaction as we know it in the West does not "simply take place" in Bang Chan. Rather, there is always the intervening factor of whether individuals want it to take place. Siamese are, first and foremost, free and independent souls. Much of the time they fulfill each other's expectations, but this is only because they want to, not because others expect it of them or because the situation demands it. It is the individual that is primary, not the social relationship. The strength of this principle is demonstrated by the fact that one is almost never surprised when one's expectations about another are not fulfilled. The assumption is: "If he did not do it, he must have had his own good reason."

181 154 *156 571 The potentialities for interpersonal frustration that are inherent in such a system are minimized largely by the hesitation on the part of individuals to build up strong expectations about people or events. In general, the Thai are a people who do not live at, and rarely reach, a high emotional pitch. Witness, for example, the specifications of "sanug-ful activities," those which afford the greatest pleasure: they are novel, diverting, comfortable, and frivolous, but there is no Faustian intensity about these joys. They are all rather muted emotional experiences. The point here is simply that in this kind of psychological environment, people rarely permit themselves to become *so* committed to an activity or to another person that the frustration of that commitment will be overly disturbing to them. They proceed from a premise which says in effect: "Well, it is really not that important that he did not do what I expected of him. I will simply have to make do."

181 154 *156 There are a few aspects of the villagers' concern with *sanug* that warrant underscoring. First, from an analytic point of view, *sanug* seems to reflect an attempt on the part of the villagers to lead a psychologically integrated life, wherein the time and energy one gives to an activity is rewarded immediately and directly with pleasure. This low-keyed pleasure should be an inextricable part of the total situation in which one finds oneself (or more accurately, into which one places oneself), not something to be deferred until a later, "more appropriate" time when it becomes an isolated segment of experience. Essentially, *sanug* should be—it not always is—a concurrent aspect of almost everything that one does. At the same time, however, these conditions are also the source of an inevitable paradox. Since "sanug-ful" activities are, by definition, novel and diverting, and

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since even the most novel activities eventually become routine or stale, it is obviously impossible for all one's hours to be animated with *sanug*. From a total time perspective, many of the villagers' activities are of course either "sanug-fully" fallow or "sanug-fully" short-lived. To a large extent, this paradox is resolved *subjectively* by the short-term time perspective of the villagers. This is the second major point to be noted about *sanug*, that is, *sanug* reflects a more generalized tendency on the part of the villagers to concern themselves with activities that require only brief time commitments or whose effects are immediately forthcoming. Bang Chaners are not an impatient people in an active, negative sense, but they do have difficulty in attending to tasks that demand from them a sense of compulsiveness or staying power. They will often drop demanding tasks right in the middle once they have recognized that the work is taking longer than originally expected. What is striking is that they will do this with apparently no sense of frustration over not having fulfilled their aims and with no regret over having wasted their time. It is as if their original purposes had simply become irrelevant, and they had gone on to other things. This is precisely the attitude, for example, surrounding the construction of the unusable road referred to earlier leading from the Minburi Highway to the Bang Chan school. After devoting considerable labor to building the high mound that would form the foundation of the road, villagers lost interest when they were unable to obtain funds for its surfacing. Since no one was ever interested in maintaining it, the road now lies in the middle of a rice field, rutted and pitted; much of the foundation has sunk back to the level of the adjacent fields. However, no villager has ever considered the road a fiasco or "folly"; it was just something done in the past and has since been forgotten. The road project might be revived in the future, but from the villagers' point of view that too is irrelevant. The point is that *sanug*, with its emphasis on novelty and diversion, is expressive of this same underlying time orientation. In the villagers' way of thinking, no activity is really worth doing unless it has the potentiality for fun.

Another expression of the villagers' concern with play, related in some respects to what will be discussed in the next section, is their preoccupation with humorous *topics* of conversation. For the most part, they enjoy hearing and telling stories with a "banana peel" twist: of a husband who is caught by his wife sleeping with another woman; of an individual who, through his failure to take heed, is cheated out of his money. Such stories of course always concern other people, not those immediately present. Too, stories that combine whimsy and the supernatural—for example, of a "super-dog" that can find buried treasure or foretell the future—elicit laughter, although often with a tinge of apprehension that the stories may be true. However, what is most impressive about these and similar stories is the amount of time given to them.

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("Who knows what he was in earlier lives and what powers he brought with him into this one?"), there is enough reality about the tale to make people want to listen. Moreover, it is wish-fulfilling fantasy; people laugh because reality has been outraged, but with a lingering desire that it really could be.

The kinds of stories outlined above do not exhaust the villagers' stock of conversational humor. There are also tall stories without the supernatural touch, broad burlesques, "dirty" jokes,[18] and the countless epigrams that work their way into almost any conversation; the last are not so much topics of conversation as they are means of punctuating a point. However, enough has been said to indicate that in its cognitive stylization and social psychological purposes, Bang Chan humor is not too different from Western humor. It is rather the content, frequency, and evaluation of the humor that is so distinctive. That the content should be distinctive is of course self-evident, since all humor is rooted in the implicit and familiar premises of workaday, cultural life. In fact the very essence of a joke is seeing the culturally familiar in an entirely new light. This may help to explain, incidentally, why it is always so painfully self-defeating to try "to explain" the content of a joke: its entire effect is dependent on the listener's implicit

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[18] Sexual and scatological humor in Bang Chan pose some special problems. On the one hand, because villagers take such a matter-of-fact approach to sex, there are actually few jokes and stories that aim explicitly at being titillating or risqué. For most Bang Chaners, sex is something to be experienced and enjoyed in private, not snickered about barracks-style; there is no saving in talking about sex (although there may be in playing with tabooed words, especially if cleverly done). Also, villagers seem to lack any interest in lewdness for its own sake. Not only Bang Chan, but Thai culture in general, is striking for its relative absence of attempts to edify sex: there is nothing in Thai literature or art, for example, approximating the exaggerated bawdiness of Rabelais or the graphic sensuality of the kind of sculpture found at Khajuraho and Konarak in India.

On the other hand, sexual situations are very often used as vehicles for portraying the foibles and stupidities of people. Villagers particularly enjoy stories of individuals of either sex who devise ways for seducing the unsuspecting, or of individuals who manage to outwit their spouses while philandering with their lovers; the more complex their machinations, the more amusing the stories. However, it is the social psychological, not the sexual, dimensions of these tales that form the major bases of their appeal.

Finally, it should be noted that villagers tend to distinguish between what could be called "genital" and "anal" modes of humor. The latter type has considerably fewer taboos associated with it. Thus, whereas most villagers would avoid going into descriptive detail in reporting the physical aspects of a tale of sexual conquest, they would have few qualms about discussing (and often with acoustical detail) such things as people who pass air in public or who otherwise get themselves into compromising anal situations. (Interestingly, J. Marvin Brown in his linguistic work with Thai informants, often including female university students, reports in a personal communication that he encountered difficulty in obtaining the various Thai terms for sexual organs and acts, but that the terms for anal and excretory behavior were given with little hesitation.)

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are social peers, the Bang Chaners would easily turn the conversation to a discussion of the technical aspects of rice farming or even gambling. The latter would likely be discussed with a social superior only after some acquaintance. On the other hand, if one were clearly the other's superior, the superior would probably talk not about the methods of rice farming but, more generally and benignly, inquire, "Is all going well with you? Is there any way I might help you?" He might even proffer some unsolicited advice or aid. The tone and theme of the conversation would be expressive largely of the superior's concern with the welfare of his new-found friend, which the latter would typically accept.

All this is usually accompanied by gentle laughter and careful attention to appropriate pronominal forms. The good host will also serve his guest rain water, and if possible, scented rain water. If opportunity and finances permit, he may even offer him a warm Coca-Cola. The youngster who will actually serve the refreshment will make sure that it is on a coaster and that his hands are in the proper ritual position when he offers the drink to the guest. Such are the ingredients from which potential friendships are made.

Although the particulars of the kind of politeness found among family and friends are different from the above, the forms are essentially the same. Villagers do not talk about the funny accents of the people who live next door to them, nor do they rush to serve scented water when a brother comes to call. But they do take pains to express respect for each other by using proper honorific and pronominal forms, by looking to the oldest competent family member for advice, by talking of subjects that are pleasant and amusing, but never threatening or embarrassing.

The avoidance of embarrassing topics—even when the airing of such topics may be crucially important or beneficial to one of the parties concerned—is one of the most pronounced facets of village social life. To a Westerner accustomed to outspokenness, the types of situations that villagers define as embarrassing and the lengths to which they will go to avoid them sometimes appear to border on the sado-masochistic. Detailed interviews with two women whose husbands had taken second wives, for example, indicate that although at the time they were deeply disturbed by their husbands' actions (primarily for economic reasons; secondarily for emotional-sexual ones) they never once even brought the subject up with their husbands. They explained that they were too *ʔaaj* (embarrassed) to do so. In neither case was this embarrassment expressive of any feeling of inadequacy on their parts (the fear of hearing their husbands say, "I took a second wife because you are not adequate"). It was prompted rather by the desire to avoid an awkward and potentially rancorous confrontation. They did not want to put anybody on the spot. (Whether such a confrontation would *actually* lead to overt rancor is almost impossible to ascertain because

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181 it in fact so rarely takes place. In fact, the "hypotheses" of these women are
152 perfect manifestations of what, in the technical sense, is *anxiety* rather than
57 *fear* about what might occur.) The marital situations of both these women
156 have since been routinized so that they have come to accept the second wives as part of their normal domestic lives. However, the vehemence with which they report these incidents indicates that at the time they paid for their wish to avoid embarrassment with considerable psychic distress. In terms of the basic attitudes involved, these situations were not too unlike that which obtained for Dang: to avoid a potentially sticky social situation, politeness and complete silence were maintained.

Somewhat different order from the above are the numerous instances where "good friends" will avoid reporting to each other unhappy or distressing information although it is clearly to the other's advantage to have such information in order better to cope with the difficulty. In one case, a villager had been working for weeks on a land sale deal which would have netted him a brokerage fee of two thousand *baht* (approximately one hundred dollars, a considerable sum in a community where the average annual family income is, before expenses, only eighty-five hundred *baht*). A friend had meanwhile learned that another villager, with whom he was not at all close, had sweet-talked the customer into permitting him to handle the sale, much to the detriment of his own friend, the original broker. However, rather than warn the friend of what was happening, he simply said nothing. When asked to explain why he kept his silence, he said that he was just too *?aaj* to speak up. Although the consequences of "*?aaj*-ness" were in this case more extreme than usual, the situation itself was not. In another, less dramatic instance a villager mentioned to us that in coming across the rice fields that afternoon he had noticed that his neighbor's windmill had broken down. The belt connecting the windmill to the irrigating machine used in raising water into the fields had slipped from the drive shaft. However, despite the obvious importance of this fact to his neighbor—the planting of his rice seedlings was completely dependent on the noria raising a sufficient amount of water into the field at the right time—the friend failed to tell his neighbor what had happened. When asked why, he said that he was *?aaj* about making his friend unhappy.

181 What is important about the above illustrations is not so much their
152 typicality—one can cite instances where friends are considerably more
156 realistic and helpful—but rather the legitimacy of the rationalizations of the
[592] inactive friends. All Bang Chaners can understand and accept the reluctance of a villager to be the person who actually triggers off another individual's discomfort. There is a genuine (albeit misplaced) sense of responsibility about not making another unhappy. What is important is the immediate, face-to-face situation. If a person must ultimately suffer, that is his own problem; but at least the friend can say, "I did not 'cause' it."

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Villagers also recognize the reluctance of an individual to become involved in another person's problems on the grounds of avoiding the accusation of *actually* having caused them. They say (but again, empirical instances of this type are very hard to find) that frequently the person with good intentions is turned on by the very friend he is trying to help, for example, "Since you know so much about the broken windmill perhaps you were the one who broke it!" Both these attitudes result from a rather overinflated view of one's importance to the friend, as if the friend would be more concerned with the agent of information than with the information itself. This is not so much a confusion of means and ends as a re-identification of them. Finally, some of the villagers' reluctance is probably also due to simple indifference or laziness regarding the plight of the friend.

Other expressions of the "ʔaaj-ness" complex are more clearly altruistic than the above. Villagers explain, for example, that the reason there is never any more than one candidate for the post of hamlet or commune headman, on the rare occasions when such elections are held, is to avoid embarrassing the individuals involved. The eventual headman would be embarrassed because the presence of a competitor would suggest doubt about his competence; the candidate who lost would be embarrassed by the very fact that he lost. To avoid hurt feelings, only one candidate is presented, voted on, and elected.

We have been talking above about politeness primarily in a negative sense, that is, about the lengths to which villagers will go to *avoid* discomforting others or upsetting peaceful relationships. This aspect was stressed because its expressions represent a somewhat unique form of patterned social interaction. However, the many positive forms of the villagers' politeness to friends and kin should not be minimized: their concern with choosing topics of conversation they think will interest or entertain others; their search for opportunities to flatter them, sometimes in pseudo-mocking fashion, but more often to make them feel good; their attention to providing others with a pleasing audience—being silent, attentive, and eager when others are declaiming on a favorite subject. Of course, many times the villagers are not listening, but they try to behave as if they were. The aim here is to make others feel that what they are saying is worthwhile. An important part of this is that one almost never directly challenges the veracity or logic of the speaker's statements. If disbelief is the only appropriate response, it should be done silently. Nothing except personal pain and interpersonal tension would be gained from a direct challenge. If one feels strongly enough about the issue, which is very rare,[16] the presentation of an *alternative* view would not be inappropriate. But one

[16] The rarity of strong feelings is due to the fact that so often the very purpose of such conversations is to convey politeness and nothing more. The actual topic of conversation is simply a medium of contact, not a matter to be seriously discussed.

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Chan. However, there remains the crucial question of how villagers manage to develop the long-term relationships that they do have, for despite the inevitable unpredictability of all human contacts, most Bang Chaners do live together in family units for more or less sustained periods of time, fathers do save for years in order to give their sons respectable ordinations into the monkhood, relatives and friends who have not seen each other since childhood do assemble for the cremation of a late kinsman or mutual friend, and mature adults do continue to feel a profound sense of respect and obligation to individuals who were their teachers when they were youngsters. What are the bases and rewards for these enduring interpersonal commitments?

The immediate rewards for these commitments are, on the one hand, quite apparent. They involve such things as the simple, unrationalized kind of love found among any group of kin or close friends. In the case of the ordination and cremation, there is the reward of making merit, not only for the son and the departed soul, but for all those who sponsor and participate in the ceremonials. The satisfactions gained from increasing one's social prestige by putting on an ostentatious ceremonial are not to be overlooked either. At a more subtle level in the case of the respectful student, the reward is gained from knowing that one is behaving in a proper and courteous way toward one's *aacaan* (in its social psychological connotations, similar to the Indian term *guru*) and is thus upholding established normative patterns. The rewards of maintaining the rituals of the moral order are not to be glossed over for Bang Chaners, like most Siamese, are a deeply ethical people. This is not meant as an evaluation of their behavior or as a statement of their capacity to conform to their ethical prescriptions, but simply as a statement of their preoccupation with ethical concerns. The rewards of *feeling* (genuinely or self-deceptively) that one has behaved in an ethically and ritualistically prescribed way are among the most satisfying of sentiments, although as indicated in the discussion of "social cosmetics," villagers often use the rituals of ethical behavior as substitutes for more demanding interpersonal involvements. Indeed, the great emphasis given to the performance of ethical rituals (speaking in soft and gentle words, honoring one's mentors) helps perpetuate the loosely structured relationships found in the community in that conformity to these rituals is perceived by many as comprising the fulfillment of their interpersonal obligations. Beyond this they are free to pursue their own interests. To a large extent the ritualistic forms serve as a comforting psychological justification for the pursuit of individualistic concerns, *i.e.*, "But I otherwise treat others so nicely." [30] This is not the result of conscious

[30] In one of his more recent and typically penetrating works, Goffman (1963) coins the terms "Involvement Shields," "Main Involvements," and "Subordinate

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*156 psychological manipulation. The frequency with which villagers evaluate themselves and others in terms of the performance of these rituals and the high frequency of rituals in actual behavior attests to the seriousness which Bang Chaners attach to them. Their compensatory nature in no way detracts from their importance to the individual. In fact, the precise opposite seems to be the case. Bang Chaners are a highly ethical people irrespective of the social psychological functions such ethics may serve.

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Less apparent than the above immediate rewards for fulfilling interpersonal commitments but perhaps the very factor that is common to most of them is the sense of reciprocity that is at the basis of all enduring relationships in Bang Chan. Reference was made to the *quid pro quo* nature of Thai social relationships at several points in the text. However, the importance of this consideration cannot be fully appreciated without realizing that the functioning of the entire Thai social system is ultimately dependent on it. Individuals become involved with others and do things for them because they consciously expect others to respond in kind. This applies to the relationships existing between family members who live together *because* such an arrangement is most advantageous to each; to the father who gives his son an ordination *in order that* the latter will make merit for him and feel obligated to care for him when he becomes old; to the friends and relatives who make merit for the departed soul *because* of the good things he had done for them during his lifetime; to the adults who feel obligated to their childhood teacher *because* of the knowledge, and thus power, he imparted to them. It might well be, as Mauss (1954 [originally

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[114] [121] Involvements" to describe in theoretical terms what has been analyzed here empirically. The major point of Goffman's concepts, and of his entire book, is that human behavior is typically polyphasic (people act one way and simultaneously think or feel another); that there are types and degrees of involvement with people, situations, and self; that situational behavior typically entails patterns of "deception" as ways of implementing disinvolvement (or, as he says, as ways "to conceal improper involvement and to affect appropriate involvement"); and most important that such patterns of "deception" are culturally—and not as heretofore assumed, idiosyncratically—phrased. His definition of "Involvement Shields" (p. 41) is particularly apposite to the discussion above: ". . . we think of involvement shields as one means by which the individual can maintain the impression of proper involvement while he is actually delinquent in his situational obligations."

Dealing mostly with American culture, Goffman does not of course analyze ethical rituals as a particular kind of "Involvement Shield." Americans favor other, more culturally distinctive patterns of deception. Also, he uses the term "involvement" in the same way that I have been using the term "commitment." Unfortunately, neither Goffman nor I say very much about the conditions, cultural or psychological, which determine whether a person is fully ("properly and appropriately") involved or committed in any particular situation or is simply shielding himself. However, I would argue on theoretical grounds that the *decision* is almost always idiosyncratic, the *actual behavior* almost always cultural.

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*125 [121] bility that lies at the heart of the SCT analysis. As Kluckhohn has said (1959: 247; see also 1951: 421–422):

> The most specific quality of anthropological research arises from its preoccupation with culture. This concept (in the technical, anthropological sense) refers to those *selective* ways of feeling, thinking, and reacting that distinguish one group from another. . . . In the strict sense, we can speak of culture only when there are two or more objectively possible and functionally effective means or modes of meeting the same need, . . . and a given group exhibits a consistent and stylized preference for one path to the goal among a number of alternatives that are—from the observer's point of view—all open.

121 *125 • 181 In this light, what is most significant about the responses is not that they are in themselves descriptively unusual, nor even that other cultural groups could not share some of them (the principle of "limited possibilities," supported by linguistic constraints, undoubtedly operates here), but rather that of all the objectively potential ways in which to deal with the SCT situations, the villagers select a few distinctive ways to the exclusion of others. In the example above, "the most important thing in his life" is *not* "his family" (the need for close social affiliation; being a source or recipient of succorance), his "love affair" (emotional-sexual need), "knowing himself" (realistic assessment of one's capacity for specific achievement), "passing his examination" (the need for status and accomplishment), or any other equally feasible response. Rather the response is "having or not having something to eat" (elemental subsistence). At bottom, it is the selective aspect of the SCT responses—in contrast to their strangeness or familiarity, which are secondary descriptive characteristics—that defines their essential "Thai-ness."

121 *125 For readers who may be surprised by the interpretive labels given the above responses, it should be noted that we have touched here upon what is probably *the* crucial anthropological problem. I have tried briefly to suggest what these responses, if they were given, might mean—but in Thai, not American, terms. This compounds our interpretive problem considerably. The fact that such alternative responses are not typical is in itself, as we have just indicated, of extreme importance. However, if they were given, their meanings would not necessarily be the same to the villagers as they are to us. By way of illustration: it is hard to imagine any Bang Chaner completing the statement *"The most important thing in his life is . . ."* with the words "knowing himself." Few villagers are that introspective or self-objectifying. However, if by chance an informant did offer this completion, it would certainly not mean, as it does among some American subcultural groups, "the need for self-acceptance, personal identity, freedom from intra-psychic tensions," etc. (See Erikson 1950, 1954, 1959; Riesman

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*125 15 should conform. (For example: *"The best way to treat a subordinate is . . . to speak to him with kind and agreeable words"; "When he thinks of his father, he thinks of . . .* the goodness and kindness his father has done for him.") This is not a universal pattern since definitions of the ideal are ambiguous, lacking, or inappropriate for many of the items; also, such definitions seem not to be applied to items which imply immediate action. However, they do appear with sufficient frequency to be noticeable.

156 None of this should be surprising, inasmuch as viewing behavior in terms of "the good" and "the proper" is a central characteristic of the villagers' thought and idiom. They tend, *considerably* more than Americans, to evaluate (in an ethical sense) people and events rather than describe them, and even to describe by evaluating. Ask most villagers: "What kind of a person is so-and-so?" and their replies will consistently be in terms of whether he is "bad" or "good," rather than in terms of non-evaluative description, *e.g.*, he is "funny," "passive," "interesting." The words, *khon maj dii* and *khon dii* ("a bad person" and "a good person") are two of the most frequently occurring items in the Thai lexicon. One might epigrammatically characterize much of the villagers' thought as "super-ego-dominated." That this mode of thought should be applied to many of the SCT situations is hardly unexpectable.[9]

121 15 Having recognized this tendency, however, there is the problem of assessing its psychocultural meaning. Do such appeals to the ideal, especially as applied to the self, in any way weaken our definition of the responses as "predispositions to action?" Are many of the responses mere verbalisms that have little to do with real behavior?

121 114 15 A number of theorists, notably Murdock (1940 and 1954) and Kluckhohn (1943*b* and 1951) have taken the position that cultural behavior should be distinguished into two fundamentally different forms: ideal patterns and real patterns. The former are "those norms which are verbalized as the ideals to which behavior should conform" (Murdock 1954: 22); and the latter, patterns of actual, overt behavior. Opler has taken issue with the necessity for this distinction, and has argued (1948: 116):

> My own feeling is that the concern over precepts or ideal patterns which contrast with or stand apart from behavior is a pleasant distraction which will not get us very far. In my opinion the disparity between rule and behavior in society has been greatly exaggerated. Actually, behavior remains remarkably close to rules or precepts which are

[9] This same characteristic has been described in other contexts (Wilson and Phillips 1958, Phillips 1958, L. M. Hanks 1959*a* and 1959*b*) as the essentially moral nature of the villagers' universe: the tendency, largely implicit, for Bang Chaners to perceive events of the most diverse kinds within an ethical frame of reference. It might well be, as Redfield had argued for many years (1941, 1953, and 1956) that such a cognitive orientation is characteristic of all peasant peoples.

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averages out to 40 percent.) There are no widely shared notions about the nature of a "close friend," an individual who, although a social equal, might be expected to be a source of dependence. When the quality of the friend's fellowship is challenged or placed in serious doubt, the majority of informants accept this as a reasonable possibility and exhibit little effort to reintegrate the social rupture that is thus created. In situations where the reasons for, and parties of, rejection are unknown, villagers respond with genuine self-confidence and equanimity. Excepting the "conception of friendship" item, predispositions in this area tend toward "unimodality," although not to the degree that we encountered in the area of authority.

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Orienting Toward Others

The materials to be covered in this section aim mainly at the villagers' perceptions of the way human relations should be conducted and their notions of desirable and undesirable human qualities. To a certain extent, my purpose is to check how typical and representative many of the statements on interpersonal contact are that were made earlier in the text. However, two important points about the nature of this "check" are in order. First, it must be remembered that we are dealing here with the villagers' perceptions of desirable human qualities, not those that an outside observer identifies. Inevitably, there are certain areas that an outsider may consider primary, but which the villagers may simply take for granted, or vice versa. The complete absence of references to the desirability of *sanug* or being an "amusing talker" in the responses below is a case in point. Villagers, of course, are aware of the desirability of *sanug* and probably could not get along well without it. But the capacity to be "sanug-ful" is, in their environment, such a familiar and undistinguished human attribute that to them it does not merit being singled out for special regard. As a "check," therefore, these data serve mainly to identify any inconsistencies that may appear between our own perceptions and those of the villagers, rather than to provide full confirmation of the earlier observations. Likewise, it is possible that this material may reveal concerns not previously noted. Second, it should be clear that when there is confirmation, it will obviously be expressed in the villagers' idiom, not our own. Few informants below explicitly say that what they most like about others is their cordiality and affability. However, several (irrespective of sex) do say that they like the fact that others "talk sweetly," "are not coarse," or have "a soft and gentle way." This is their way of communicating the desirability of being polite and nonimposing toward others. Similarly, their indication that *"In their relations with people, the thing they are most careful of is . . .* talking to them correctly and properly"; ". . . manners and etiquette"; or

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774 is recognized to be capricious; and (4) his departure from the body is both cause and effect of the loss of one's wits, steadiness, and equilibrium. If the *khwaan* stays away too long, the individual may become deranged and may die.

*125 *128 152 • 181 828 In these terms, the seven individuals who say that when they are frightened they would call back their "soul-stuff" seem to be expressing two related needs: a recognition of their ultimate dependence on supernatural forces and, very much like the majority group of informants, a preoccupation with psychological stability. There is in fact implicit to these responses almost an assumption that one of the marks of an adult, civilized "human being" (in its basic ontological sense) is the achievement of stability, orderliness, and stoicism in a universe—both inner and outer—that at any time may regress to a more primitive, chaotic state. The great attention that villagers give to being *riab-rɔɔj* (neat, clean, well-organized in appearance, demeanor, and speech); the fact that they often distinguish between adults and children in terms of the disorganization and randomness of the latter's behavior; the very fact that an individual's *khwaan* is most wayward during childhood; the high value that is placed upon being *chɔɔj* and the negative value that is placed on having a "hot heart" (*caj rɔɔn*) are all expressive of this assumption.

*125 *128 152 There are a few other categories of response to the above item that should be mentioned, although none is held by more than 8 percent of the sample. Four villagers say that the best thing to do when frightened is to run away; three villagers assert that they are never frightened; three do say that they would investigate the cause of the fright, indicating that this response is not completely lacking in Bang Chan; two say that they would comfort themselves; two are simply afraid; and two more have no idea of what to do under the circumstances.

To the item, *"When something worried him, he usually . . ."* 45 percent of the sample responds by saying that they would feel anxious, uneasy, uncomfortable, or unhappy. In essence, they seek no solution to their hypothetical problem, but simply accept the state of anxiety that has been created. For a few of them, the anxiety is extreme: they say they "could not eat, could not sleep, could not work," a response that I have heard several times in Bang Chan from villagers who were actually worrying through a problem. The other major response, held by 40 percent of the sample, is to perseverate over the problem: to keep thinking about it, to think about it constantly, or, as one villager expresses it, *"When something worried him, he usually . . .* thought about it. Sometimes he dreamt of it too."

The major theme of both the above responses is, of course, that although villagers handle their worries in an emotionally meaningful way,

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psychologically stressful situations. Finally, 20 percent of the sample responds simply by leaving the field: they go away or run away from those who annoy them. Although an "active" response in the sense that energy is expended in overt behavior, the reaction is a patent evasion of the annoyance and its perpetrators.

The total of these various categories is 86 percent, indicating that the villagers' tendency to avoid dealing directly with people who annoy them is highly unimodal indeed.

The distribution of responses to *"When he insulted me, I . . ."* is strikingly similar to the above. Because it is a more extreme expression of hurt, some of the responses are a bit more dramatic; also, the internal frequencies of a few of the categories are a bit different. However, the overriding tendency is to deal with the insult by avoiding the insulter and simply feeling internally—angrily, "indifferently," or unhappily. Here, 40 percent of the sample responds with anger or dislike; 16 percent indicate that they have no feelings about the insult or are *chɔɔj-chɔɔj;* and 13 percent are depressed, sorry, or unhappy. Only a single individual, however, reacts by leaving the field.

There are two categories of response for which there are no equivalents on the earlier item. Fourteen percent of the informants indicate that the insult has provoked them into improving themselves or behaving better. However, they are explicit in indicating that this is principally a means of ridding themselves of their antagonists. Another 14 percent present what are essentially "avoidance of the stimulus" responses. They say that they have never been insulted or they discuss the immorality of insults. Not surprisingly, all but two of the Buddhist monks in the sample react in this manner.

In summary, the SCT data strongly confirm the villagers' behavioral tendencies to control, deny, and inhibit their aggressive impulses. The data indicate that they do not lack such impulses, but rather that they are unable to act them out in an overt, social manner. Instead, they respond internally and live with the hostility (in an angry, "indifferent," or unhappy fashion) or work it out in the privacy of their own minds. The data also indicate that this tendency is culturally unimodal.

Dominant Drives and Wishes

The materials covered in this section are to the author the most interesting of all the SCT data, not so much from the point of view of what they reveal about the villagers' psychic life as from that of providing answers to questions about an area that is virtually unknown. There are numerous things that the villagers do—make merit, grow rice, tell funny stories, treat

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• 181 others politely, and the like—which, on the basis of the time and effort given to them, an observer might point to as representing the villagers' *128 major concerns. To a certain extent, I did this myself in the earlier, 181 "naturalistic observation" chapter. However, there are no available data on what villagers *themselves* perceive as the most important things in life or what *they* identify as their hopes and aspirations. Although few of the responses below are in themselves startling, what is revealing is the relative weight given to the considerations that are mentioned.

*125 It must be emphasized that the first two items here permit villagers to *128 move in almost any direction and, if they wish, to indulge their fondest *156 fancies. The fact that only a few take advantage of the latter is testament to 181 the deeply ingrained sense of self-constraint and personal limitation ("I know my place: not too high and not too low") that they impose upon themselves.

To the item, *"He wishes he were . . ."* (in Thai, *"Raw wants to be . . ."*) all but five villagers respond in terms of what is essentially their public role or public image. Of the five who do not, two are individuals who do not want to suffer or do not want to have anything to worry about; one wishes he were intelligent and clever; and the other two phrase their wishes in such abstract terms ("a person who behaves well") that they simply resist further explication. In any event, these are the individuals whose responses most closely approximate what could be called "responses of psychic introspection," an area which villagers for the most part ignore.

The majority of the responses fall into three major categories. Forty percent of the villagers respond in terms of either specifying a particular status they might achieve ("an army officer"; "a big shot"; "a government official who is comfortable and has honor"; "the mother of a doctor, district officer, or governor"); saying that they would like to be rich; or simply by saying that they would like to be good and diligent workers "growing a lot of paddy" or "having good jobs." Within this majority category, nine individuals specify the first type of wish, the examples cited being the most self-indulgent replies; seven respond in terms of becoming wealthy; and six want to be competent workers. This last response is essentially a more optimistic or assertive phrasing of the one to follow—villagers want to be a better version of what they are already—and could just as readily be included there.

The second major response, held by 25 percent of the sample, is to be just what they are now. This is a description of their responses rather than a deduction from them. They explicitly say that they "do not want to change"; "my status compels me to be what I am"; "only want to be a rice farmer, to earn my living by raising rice, as I do now." Although a minority group, the fact that so many villagers should go so far as to deny the

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premise of the item in order to express their satisfaction over their present and traditional state is not without significance. It is important to note that were we to deduct the six "competent worker" responses from the previous category, this category would then represent the majority.

The third major response, given by 20 percent of the sample, describes being a "good," "respected," and "non-trouble-making" individual as the principal wish of the informant. A few of these villagers want to be "good

TABLE 26

He wishes he were . . .
Raw *wants to be . . .*

STATUS:	40%	a rich man. Then he could do anything he wanted.
		a teacher, in order to teach children so that they will have knowledge and be good children.
		an army officer.
		a person who has a lot of money and paddy fields, because I have many children. I have ten *raj* (four acres) of land now. What will the children do when they grow up? It worries me.
		a good worker, growing a lot of paddy.
STASIS:	25%	he does not want to be anything.
		he never wishes anything, because his status compels him to be what he is.
		he is quite content to remain a farmer.
GOOD PERSON:	20%	a man who behaves well and has goodness, virture, and honesty.
		a good person, not a *nagkleeng;* one who does not *thiawtree* (go out, enjoy oneself, leave the family).

citizens," a response which, although small in number, reflects the importance that villagers attach to being members of the nation-state. (Considering all the different things that they might wish to be, how many Americans would complete the item, *"He wishes he were . . ."* with the statement: ". . . a good American"?) More than half these informants, however, build an interpersonal dimension explicitly into their replies by saying that they either want to be persons who "do not lie or incite people, do not have trouble with others" or are persons "whom others trust and respect."

What is most revealing about the above responses are the unexpected omissions. There are no references at all to religious considerations, even on

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*125 *128 781 [782] *125 *128 571 *156 • 181 [593] the part of older people.[12] Particularly obvious is the absence of any reference to accumulating Buddhist merit. Neither is there any reference to the pleasures derived from dealing happily or enjoyably with other people. The closest we get to this is with the responses of two informants who are concerned mainly with the welfare of their children, and who speak in terms of "inspiring respect" in their children or assuming the role of "doctor" who, either by his knowledge (in case the children are ill) or wealth, could take care of them. Given all the conceivable things that villagers might wish to be—fanciful, real, personal, social, of this world, and of any world—the dominant wish is to have status, wealth, and respectability within their prevailing peasant context.

*125 *128 181 556 The next item, *"Most of all he wants to . . ."* is essentially a confirmation of the above findings. However, perhaps because of the syntax of the Thai version of the item and the inclusion of the word, "most" (*"The thing which raw wants the most is (namely) . . ."*) the responses assume a considerably more extreme and "unimodal" form. The overwhelming majority of the informants, 77 percent, want only one thing: money. A few of them say that they want what are essentially cultural variations of money: property, rice fields, land, cattle, and jewelry. Several of them almost wax purple about the significance of money in their lives: *"The thing which raw wants the most is (namely) . . .* have money and gold, because money can help us all the time. Whatever one wishes to have, one can use money to buy it all. Even when one wants a wife, if one has a lot of money one can have anyone's daughter"; ". . . have money. Money is better than anything else. It is only the moon and stars that money cannot buy"; ". . . to have money. She wants money very much because when she lacks other things she can find something to take their place, but when she lacks money she is most unhappy"; ". . . have wealth because everything else comes after that." These responses, of course, explicate the major function of money. They indicate that money is not an end in itself, but a means by which to achieve some of the other life goals appearing here.

*125 *128 181 593 556 The minority responses to this item are in no case held by more than four individuals. Four villagers do give religious responses, saying that what they want most is to accumulate merit (one mentions both merit and money); three refer to maintaining the welfare of their families (one of them merging money and succorance by saying that he wants enough money to provide for his family); and four say that they want happiness (again, two of them linking money and happiness together).

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[196] [193] [12] There is nothing in the grammatical-semantic structure of the Thai version of this item inhibiting a religiously oriented response. The Thai cognate for the verb "to be" here is *"pen,"* which could easily result in a response such as *". . . pen khon thii mii bun,"* or ". . . a person who has merit." This would be the most obvious "religious" completion under the circumstances.

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TABLE 27

Most of all, he wants to . . .
The thing which raw *wants the most is (namely) . . .*

MONEY:	77%	have wealth, because everything else comes after that.
		have money.
		have money. Only one thing.
		have money.
		have money, clothes, and ornaments.
		have money so that he can buy things.
		have money.
		get money.
MERIT:	8%	get some merit. *Raw* want only to make merit.
FAMILY:	6%	to have knowledge; have a happy and prosperous family.
HAPPINESS:	8%	have happiness of body and mind.

The next two items differ from the preceding primarily in being more realistic and constraining. The items, *"The most important thing in his life is . . ."* and *"His greatest ambition is . . ."* ask the villagers to specify their real life goals rather than to indulge themselves (if they wish) and express their dreams and fancies. This difference in stimulus value seems to have charged their responses with a greater sense of seriousness and personal involvement than was the case on the earlier items, although from a substantive point of view the differences are not very divergent. The concerns expressed are obviously cut from the same cloth.

TABLE 28

The most important thing in life is . . .
The most important thing in raw *life is (namely) . . .*

SUBSISTENCE AND WEALTH:	57%	earning a living is the most important thing.
		to earn a living. What he should do to get a good job.
		food.
		having enough money to spend.
		a good career; a lot of money.
RELIGION:	10%	that one must make merit, so that in the future and in his next life he will have something to depend on.
FAMILY:	10%	her father and mother.
OTHERS (LESS THAN 10% EACH):		his father and mother, who have done *raw* good. He must repay the *bunkhun* (good deeds which assume reciprocation).
		how to be happy.
		death. Death is final. Beyond death is nothing.
		things concerning the heart.

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*125 *128 • 181 To the item, *"The most important thing in life is . . ."* 57 percent of the sample responds in terms of earning a living or food and money. Most of the "earning a living" responses are expressed quite flatly, but some of the food responses are presented almost with a note of urgency: ". . . rice. Very important. If there's no rice to eat, then life is very bad"; ". . . having or not having something to eat. If you have something to eat: good. If you have nothing: trouble. We people are born in order to find things to fill our mouths and stomachs. . . ." As noted earlier, the concern with elemental subsistence is primary here. The minority responses, although encompassing several categories, which thus reduces the representation in each one, are by no means insignificant. (Taken as a whole, they represent almost half the informants.) Five villagers here do stress the importance of

TABLE 29

His greatest ambition is . . .
Raw *greatest ambition is (namely)* . . .

SUBSISTENCE AND WEALTH:	44%	to be rich.
		to have a place to live and food to eat all the time, so that nobody will look down on him.
		to have money.
		in regard to his daily living. How can one count on stealing things?
MERIT:	12%	to have happiness in the present and in the future. Must try to build up goodness and to avoid different kinds of badness which will bring punishment in the next life.
HAPPINESS:	10%	to have happiness in life, because her own life has met mostly with failures.
STATUS:	10%	to have a better status than *raw* now have.

religion and making merit; and five others point to their parents or their families as the most important things in life, responses which are slightly suggestive of a concern with fulfilling interpersonal obligations or with succorance. Three others explicitly mention the fulfillment of interpersonal obligations as important. One of these individuals is concerned with others paying a debt of kindness to him; one with doing good things for others; and one makes the relationship perfectly reciprocal. Three villagers also speak of happiness as important; two, with perfect realism, mention death. Finally, two villagers mention the importance of human feelings; this is the only reference that is made to an inner psychological state in all the responses presented to the items in this section.

The responses to the item, *"His greatest ambition is . . ."* are very similar to the above. The "earning a living" reply is replaced in frequency by the more assertive desire to be wealthy, but the food reply is just as

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common. Together, they encompass the responses of 44 percent of the informants. A third type of reply comes into evidence here, and while it is substantively not at all different from the foregoing responses, it is stylistically interesting because it represents such an excellent summation of the ambitions of the villagers: ". . . to have a place to live and food to eat; to have clothes to wear to protect himself from the sun and the wind. That's enough." The minority responses to the item again encompass several categories: six villagers wish to make merit; five want happiness, five want higher status than they presently have; two want their families to be happy; three want to behave well; and two are simply concerned about their daily living. One of the latter raises the rhetorical question: "How can one count on stealing things?"

Analysis of the villagers' definitions of the most desirable things in life reveal an overriding concern with practical matters: money, earning a living, achieving status, and having sufficient food. Some, but relatively little, attention is given to religious concerns or to satisfactions of an interpersonal nature, including even family. Psychological satisfactions that are specified relate to abstract states of happiness or to satisfactions derived from knowing that one is "behaving well," although in both cases the number of villagers who actually point to such satisfactions is relatively low. Immanent to the responses of other villagers, but again, in relatively small number, are the satisfactions to be had from being a competent farmer who, through hard work, achieves a good harvest and "a place to live and food to eat; . . . clothes to wear to protect himself from the sun and the wind. That's enough." This careful and constrained conception of the good life extends even to situations where when given license to indulge their most extravagant desires, villagers will go no further than to admit that they might wish to be "a government official who is comfortable and has honor" or "the *mother* of a doctor, district officer, or governor." (Italics added.) Excepting this area of psychological license, the villagers descriptions of their dominant drives and wishes tend toward psychological unimodality, although the minority responses *in toto* are not at all insubstantial.

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situation. It might be added that since the Oedipal situation is very much of a moral crisis, Parsons' arguments go far in supporting Kaplan's earlier contentions. Parsons, however, says little about the *different* ways in which parents respond to the child's helplessness and little about *variations* in the intensity and types of identifications, cathexes, and internalizations that the individual may implement—factors which would obviously lead to different kinds of conformative tendencies. Our earlier materials on Bang Chan socialization are particularly instructive on this point. In fact, if Parsons' formulation were linked to those data, it would go a long way to explain precisely why Bang Chaners have such a weakly developed sense of conformity. In the same way, the contrast helps to underscore the profound sense of interpersonal involvement, dependence, and concern inculcated in members of our own culture during the developmental process. To Parsons, the quintessence of these interpersonal investments is, of course, the Oedipal situation: the prototypic encounter with the power of external authority and all that such power implies for the individual's need to conform and to deny and control his own impulses. If this interpretation is correct, it would further suggest that the Oedipal situation must be based, *in the first instance*, on the developmental experience of close interpersonal involvement—an experience which, as our Thai data demonstrate, is subject to broad cross-cultural variation.

The problem of "conformity" raises an additional question, one that has been implicit to many of our earlier remarks, but which merits explicit consideration in these final pages. At several points in the text, it was suggested that the villagers, with their profound sense of self-concern and freedom of choice, often choose to ignore or to isolate themselves from the effects and influences of others. This kind of behavior is a major dimension of their loosely structured relationships; it appears as well in their handling of dependency, anxiety, and aggression. From a psychological point of view, the behavior can be interpreted in one of two ways. On the one hand, it can be interpreted to mean that the villagers have difficulty in relating themselves to others, and use isolation as a means of defense. Implicit here is the notion of emotional deprivation, for who but a deprived person should wish to withdraw from contact with others? On the other hand, the behavior can be read to mean that the villagers are emotionally tough, and simply do not need other people very much. Here isolation is seen as self-reliance and mature emotional security. Throughout this study, I have chosen to stress the latter interpretation.

This kind of interpretation is not an easy one to justify in contemporary Western social science. Implicit to almost all of our thinking is the Judaeo-Christian assumption (more recently codified by Durkheim and Freud) that the greatest psychological pleasures an individual experiences are

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derived from his interpersonal contacts, commitments, and interdependencies. In fact, I would suggest that perhaps the major reason that Freud (although correct) placed so much emphasis on sex is because the sexual experience is the most absolute expression of interdependency. My materials from this little community in Thailand, where psychological isolation is the norm and where this norm is so impressed upon the Western observer, have stimulated me into wondering if perhaps our past assumption has represented only *half* the story. What we have failed to see (or if we have seen, ignored) is that there is immense psychological satisfaction to be gained through psychological isolation, or from experiences that require or presuppose isolation. Such satisfactions are found in the pleasures of lonely creativity. (Has a committee, family, tribe, or neighborhood ever written a symphony or a poem, or even a fable?) Additional examples are sleep ("sweet sleep"); directing oneself toward the extremities of human experience in matters of faith and religious belief (by definition, a lonely, isolated experience); inducing mind-body alterations, as in hallucinatory states. These are all pleasurable experiences that can be talked *about*, but never shared. My point is of course that for historical and other reasons we have come to assume that loneliness is maladaptive, something which at best is to be avoided, at worst dreaded. And this is clearly not the case: no more than is the experience of dealing with a spouse, a brother, a child, a friend, or a teacher maladaptive.

What is perhaps most surprising is that the evidence for the need for isolation and privacy has been so readily available, and yet until recently so easily ignored. All of us who have observed children—in whom the elemental psychological needs of our species are most clearly and unashamedly expressed—have been impressed by the child's need for contact, love, response, and stimulation. But equally apparent is the child's need for privacy and lack of stimulation. Thus, we are just now beginning to become aware that the child's use of his thumb (in Bang Chan, his forefinger), his trips into quiet fantasy, his recurrent assertion, "Leave me alone!" are not simply amusing infantile epiphenomena, nor even defenses against an oppressive external world, but are expressions of a fundamental human need to be with oneself.

The villagers of Bang Chan, of course, are not children. They are people who for their own distinctive psychocultural reasons—their Buddhist ethos, their child-rearing practices, their loose and simple social system—have heightened this essential human need to be left alone, and express it in a mature, adult way. Unless one assumes that the only universe is the social universe, theirs is not a case of emotional deprivation. It is rather an honest and unabashed expression of another kind of psychological need, one which we in the Western world, for our own peculiar